

Introduction

These guidelines reflect both the current database indexing requirements of the revised public records law and planned improvements in two related , statewide services of the Department of Cultural Resources—public records management and public access to government information. The guidelines lay the foundation for future “global” state and local standards for managing and indexing all of North Carolina ’s electronic public records.

The department, through its Division of Archives and History and Division of State Library, is committed to providing mechanisms for the widest possible public access to government information. These mechanisms include the development of locator systems that are compliant with national and international standards for data indexing , access, and exchange. The division supports the further development of interoperability standards through cooperation and consultation with other agencies.

Similarly, the department is charged with managing state and local public records , the heart of government information. The records management program of the Division of Archives and History helps guard the general public ’s right of access to its records, the privacy rights of individuals, and the security of the records themselves. The records retention and disposition scheduling process is central to this management.

The provisions of G.S. 132-6.1. only obliquely address the statewide records management program and make no mention of locator systems. In calling for “the index,” however, the amended law prescribes one set of database documentation standards , applying equally to all state agencies, county and municipal governments, regional authorities, and other custodians of public records. And as agencies collect the specific indexing information required by the law, they will also be collecting basic data needed for locator-service indexing as well as for records retention and disposition scheduling. Accordingly , this document is divided into two major sections reflecting these complementary initiatives—“Basic Database Indexing” and “Appendix I: Advanced Database Indexing.”

“Basic Database Indexing” provides an overview of current statutory indexing requirements and includes eleven information elements with instructions for their completion. This section also provides criteria for identifying databases that must be indexed and an Electronic Records Officer Registration model form.

Appendix I: “Advanced Database Indexing” is a draft representing an initial exploration of the potential information elements to be included in a global index of state and local public records. This index structure is now under study by an ad hoc group representing the Division of Archives and History, the Advisory Committee on Electronic Records (ACER) , the Division of State Library, and the Office of State Planning. This work is being carried out under the general authority of the Department of Cultural Resources as established in G.S. § 132-8, § 132-8.1, § 132-8.2, and G.S. § 121-5. The guidelines specific to advanced